

## **Study of Juvenile Offender Re-entry EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE**

### **BARRIERS**

*Outlined by the Commission on Youth Advisory Group on July 7, 2010 unless otherwise noted*

1. There is a lack of continuity of care in treatment between the facility and the community. (*Department of Criminal Justice Services [DCJS] comment*)
2. Limitations on the range of services, program and service content, social environment, and attachment. (*DCJS comment*)
3. There are usually complex educational needs.
  - a. Committed juveniles are more likely to be eligible for special education services (3 to 7 times as likely as other children) (Leon and Weinberg, 2010).
  - b. Lack of school settings which account for the special needs, historical perceptions (of the child, the administration and teachers, school resource officers [SROs], other students), and labels that attach to children who reenroll.
4. For older youth:
  - a. The importance of continuing education is deemphasized by any histories or lack of understanding (developmental maturity) they might have.
  - b. They may not have the financial and emotional support which fosters continued education and therefore, they cannot take advantage of it (for example, they need to work to support a place to live; therefore, they are unable to go to school and may not be able to afford continued education).
  - c. They may age-out and no longer be provided with high school or GED educational opportunities by the public school system.
  - d. They may not qualify for loans which would support higher education.
5. Skill development may account for technical skills, but does not include workplace readiness skills, such as how to interview, show up for work on time, be responsible and accountable to an employer, communicate effectively, and deal with questions regarding criminal history.
6. While a correlation does exist between dropping out of school and students placed in correctional settings, dropping out of school is symptomatic of bigger issues associated with the students and their families. (These bigger issues that preempt habitual truancy and student dropouts (low socio-economic status [SES], mental health issues, lack of support, low community engagement, etc.) are the real issues that need to be addressed.)

7. Youth are not educated on the consequences of laws and felony convictions (example – the juvenile may train to be barber, but by law, they may be prohibited from handling a razor). Must work with the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR) to get certified/licensed.
8. Teachers are unprepared for the challenges of these special students and balancing them with other student populations.
9. Transitioning students from corrections to school can be difficult and problematic. If structures are not in place to help students make a smooth transition, success is less likely. *(Submitted by Dr. Dennis Moore)*
10. While a correlation does exist between student dropout behavior and students placed in correctional settings, dropping out of school is just a symptom of bigger issues associated with the students and their families. The bigger issues that preempt habitual truancy and dropout behavior (low SES, mental health issues, lack of support, low community engagement, etc.) are the real issues that need to be addressed. *(Submitted by Dr. Dennis Moore)*

*Identified by the Governor's Juvenile Re-entry Workgroup on July 13, 2010:*

1. Many juveniles have a lack of maturity or an understanding of acceptable behavior and language in the work environment.
2. Juveniles often lack the experience and skills necessary for job placements.
3. Because many juveniles do not have driver's licenses, transportation is an issue and can often be a barrier to gainful employment.
4. Released juveniles often have a lack of necessary documentation, such as birth certificates or government issued IDs.
5. Some community colleges do not want to admit adjudicated youth.
6. Despite the fact that the Virginia Code provides for juvenile record confidentiality, employers are still able to gain access to juvenile records.
7. Workforce centers need to coordinate amongst one another.
8. Re-enrollment back into the school system may be an issue.

## **BARRIERS - GENERAL**

*Outlined by the Commission on Youth Advisory Group on July 7, 2010 unless otherwise noted*

1. In addition to transitioning from a facility to the community, these youth are transitioning from youth to young adulthood or from middle school to high school.
  - a. Youth transitioning to young adulthood require an appropriate developmental maturity and supports in order to be successful. Accompanying this is a need to understand that youth cannot attain the milestones associated with developmental maturity while confined. There is no opportunity to practice and test independent decision-making and autonomy.
  - b. Most of these youth are years behind their non-delinquent peers developmentally; committed youth are among the most developmentally delayed (Altschuler et al., 2009).
2. How a youth behaves in a facility does not necessarily translate to behavior outside the facility. The transition from confinement to the community can be abrupt and disorienting, creating anxieties which translate into behavior, which, in turn, supports preconceived notions that may attach to the youth by schools, peers, community, family, etc.
3. There is a long-term effect of labeling.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS/SOLUTIONS**

*Outlined by the Commission on Youth Advisory Group on July 7, 2010 unless otherwise noted*

1. Communities in Schools (CIS) is an effective model utilized in several school divisions.
2. The Department of Correctional Education works to ensure that youth/young adults are employable when they are released. There is a focus on jobs, vocational development and employment, the potential for youth to earn CRCs, and a college program (35-40 students with GED enrolled in college courses, may leave with 9 to 12 credit hours).
3. Have employers “lined up” prior to the youth being released and form partnerships with the Workforce Instrument Boards (WIBs).
4. Possible mechanisms to alleviate problems should include mentoring and support components: *(Submitted by Dr. Dennis Moore)*
  - o Transition classrooms provide a place for students to return to the school district that addresses some of the issues associated with the transition and allows the students to be folded back into their zoned school at a natural break in the school year calendar. In the transition classroom, academics can continue, discipline issues can be addressed proactively, and special education concerns can be reviewed and addressed in an appropriate manner.

- Court liaisons are school support staff members that serve as a link between the school and the court system for court involved children with a Probation Officer (PO). The liaisons share comments and concerns with the PO regarding students on their caseloads. The liaisons are able to address school issues in the building (attendance, behavior, adjustment) with the students and provide mentorship and support. The liaisons can also refer the students or their parents to community resources. The programs provide an effective level of support and monitoring at lower costs (compared to paying PO's to do the same thing).
- School day treatment programs are mental health and school adjustment programs that provide services to students in need at the school as problems arise. The goal is to reduce problematic behaviors and disruptions while keeping kids in school. This program is used with court involved children as well as other students. My district has partnered with an agency (Y-CAPP). The agency is largely funded through Medicaid reimbursements.